

AN
EXAMINATION OF A SERMON,
PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE,
BY ROBERT HALL, M. A.
ENTITLED,
MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO ITS
INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY;
WITH AN
APPENDIX,
CONTAINING
OBSERVATIONS
UPON
A CRITIQUE ON THE SERMON,
IN THE
MONTHLY REVIEW
FOR FEBRUARY, 1800.

BY ANTHONY ROBINSON.

"The rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe is a natural
and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church
and state. Wherever we turn our eyes we shall perceive the depression
of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In
France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour,
piety had utterly decayed."

HALL'S APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

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THE BRITISH MUSEUM

OF NATURAL HISTORY

AND MINERALOGY

AND GEOLOGY

AND ZOOLOGY

AND AGRICULTURE



AND ANTIQUITIES

AND THE HISTORY OF MAN

AND THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

AND THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS

AND THE HISTORY OF THE SCIENCES

AND THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN MIND

AND THE HISTORY OF THE SENSES

AND THE HISTORY OF THE PASSIONS

AN

EXAMINATION, &c.

AFTER the reformation was effected in Scotland, a very violent prejudice prevailed against the Catholics, which rendered the profession of that religion dangerous, especially in places remote from the principal towns. A *papist* was accused of having stolen a horse, and the proof adduced of the theft was, that the horse was found in his field, into which he had jumped from a neighbouring enclosure. The poor fellow was carried to gaol and loaded with irons. An intelligent man, in the place, pitying his condition, and knowing that the charge was ridiculously false, and that he had only been accused through the operation of religious bigotry, wrote a letter to a magistrate in vindication of the prisoner, and endeavoured to shew that he was a very honest man, and incapable of the conduct with which he was charged. The letter by some means was

made public. The populace immediately cried out, kill him ! kill him ! he too is a Papist. A mob assembled round his house (a Scotch mob is always terrible) and began an assault. In vain the good gentleman alleged that he was a true son of the Kirk, in vain he reminded them of his constant presence at the word and ordinances of their own communion ; he was declared to be a papist in his heart, because he did not believe every papist a horse stealer, and his house was laid in ashes * !

In undertaking to shew that Mr. Hall's charges against atheists are ill founded, I run a similar risque ; for his party will pronounce me an atheist. —I will not, however, be deterred by this consideration from attempting to shew that every atheist is not a parricide, a debauchee, and a thief. So far am I, in fact, from any agreement with atheism in its reasoning, that I willingly accept of Mr. Hall's statement of the common argument for the being of an intelligent first Cause, and I think with him that the conclusion is direct and fair. But, although the common argument on this subject is to me perfectly satisfactory, it is not so to some others, and I can easily believe that it may be more obvious to many, that it is their duty not to cut their father's or their children's throats, than that there exists an

eternal intelligent Being, who made the visible worlds, of attributes and perfections such as the clergy ascribe to him. Mr. Hall's Sermon has excited so much attention as a piece of energetic declamation, it has been so generally read by the sect with which the preacher classes, and by so many of other sects, it is published at a crisis of such singular importance, and it touches upon particulars of such momentous controversy, that, if in the sober judgement of disinterested persons it contain any false statements or inconclusive reasoning, if it tend to inflame prejudice, to strengthen animosity, or to serve the purpose of tyrannical imposition, it would be improper to let it pass away without animadversion. That its tendency is hostile to all the charities of social life, and favourable to bigotry and intolerance, is the expressed opinion of many zealots, even of the preacher's own church; that the reasoning and statements which support this edifice of error are false and inconclusive, it is now my business to shew.

I will travel over the ground which the preacher has perambulated, examine the marks which he has set up, and in the order in which he has placed them, I will endeavour to descry where he has with studied caution and art set man traps and spring guns to annoy the unwary Rambler, and where, to overawe the timid, he has proclaimed their existence, though none are to be found.

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Proposition I. "*The sceptical or irreligious system subverts the whole foundation of morals.*"
Page 9th.

Before I enter upon an examination of this proposition, I must be permitted to observe, that throughout the whole of this intemperate harangue, the preacher avoids all definitions of the system which he wishes to render detestable, an omission unpardonable in a master of the dialectic art, but greatly subservient to the views of popular inflammation. Every man who does not court deception should be upon his guard when he sees a purpose to avoid precision, for however the lightning flash, he must know that no effect can be produced, unless a conductor guide it to a given point.

In order to establish the proposition which I have quoted, the preacher states that every man *ought* to consult his own selfish interest in all his actions, and that no authority can oblige him to forego any one personal individual advantage, except in order to obtain a greater advantage by such self-denial.

Admitting that this reasoning is true, as far as it goes to the establishment of self-interest as the foundation of moral obligation, it is certainly not true that man *does* regulate his conduct by any motive of unsocial self-interest, and without this be proved, it will not follow that the exclusion of the hopes and fears of a future world will destroy the

the practical virtues of life. Morality is attended by most powerful sanctions in this life, which press equally upon the atheist, the thief, and the christian, and of which the first must feel the full force. Morality consists simply in the discharge of the duties which flow from the relations which subsist betwixt men. Man insulated and alone is a being entirely helpless and absolutely wretched. Society is the charm of his existence and the balm of his life. To enjoy this society the individual must render himself agreeable to those who surround him, and in order to this he must respect and promote their happiness. This imposes upon him an attention to their wishes, a respect for their rights, and a dread of their violation. He instantly finds that an enlarged self-love and social are the same. Thus deeply rooted are the sanctions of morality, and of universal operation; they are not the creatures of arbitrary institution or accidental discovery, they are bottomed in the nature of human beings, and wherever man is found connected with his fellow man, their influence is felt.

These natural and eternal sanctions of virtue operate before *it is possible* to convey to the minds of children religious notions. The accommodations of infancy itself become the great teachers of morals. Before the child knows or believes aught of heaven or of hell, he learns to sacrifice present inclination, to procure the advantages of

intercourse and love. It may be affirmed with as much truth, that the social passions depend for their existence upon religious belief, as that the anti-social demand that belief to counteract and restrain their energies.

The preacher's argument is very little strengthened by his observation (page 12) that "*all reasoning on morals supposes a distinction between inclination and duties, affection and rules.* For scarcely any great object of human ambition can be named, which does not require many *sacrifices*, and which is not opposed by many inclinations of the individual who pursues it. Do we determine upon the acquisition of fortune, how many pleasures must we deny ourselves, and how many vexations must we encounter in this pursuit? Man is continually assailed by opposite interests and desires. Some must be sacrificed, their co-existence and indulgence are impossible. In determining upon this sacrifice looks he to heaven or to hell? Ridiculous! He weighs the importance of each present object, and pursues that which in his estimation is the most valuable.

Morality is the result of self-love and sympathy operating constantly upon the mind, and forming the character under the influence of *present* objects, of which he will entertain no doubt who examines nature with the steady eye of the author of "*The Theory of Moral Sentiments.*" If any one questions whether present objects afford a sufficient

sufficient motive for the restraint of passion and the correction of desire amidst contending interests, I beg him to observe the conduct of the miser, the lover, and the hero. I call upon him to leave the field of conjecture, and to examine the realities of life, and then to tell me *how great* is the influence of *future hopes and fears*.

It may, perhaps, be said that so ardent a desire after one object as is often discoverable in the miser, the lover, or the hero, can only exist in characters of peculiar strength, and that such consistency in pursuit cannot be expected from common minds. This may be granted; but must it not also be granted that a future hope of possible good in a world unknown and of a nature unknown, requires, in order to influence powerfully, still more extraordinary minds? Let the preacher's theory be put to the test of experience. If this prospect of selfish interest and individual remuneration in a future life had any effect, as it is infinite and unbounded, reducing all other interests to non-entity, it must annihilate all vice and *perfect* all character. *Facts* shew us that mixed state of things which results from passion *imperfectly* restrained, and selfishness *imperfectly* counteracted by the influence of reason and feeling upon the social advantages of life; but they discover to us nothing in corroboration of the theory of the preacher, or the actual influence of his future
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hopes and fears*. It may, therefore, be fairly inferred, that whatever human virtue is, it is by the operation of the actual circumstances of man, by his present hopes and fears, and that a change in the faith of a country will not at all affect the morality of it.

The real state of morals in different countries strongly enforces this observation. In China there is no public religion, and in various regions in the East the doctrine of a future world is unknown. Many countries have undergone an entire revolution in their religious system, and yet the state of morals is the same. Indeed, giving an allowance for the different operation of climate, and of the state of civilization upon the human constitution, there is little variety in the morality of different countries. In other respects men, social and dependent men, are every where the same; and although professing opposite religions, and some no religion at all, are essentially alike in moral conduct.

It is vain to allege the *proper*, against the *actual* influence of the hopes and fears of men

* Upon the nonsensical hypothesis that man is always determined in his conduct by pure and individual selfishness, upon which hypothesis whatever has the appearance of reasoning in this discourse is bottomed, I demand an explanation of *parental affection*, an affection in general most disinterested, directly opposed to narrow selfishness, and yet no natural instinct, but a mere creature of *association*.

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concerning their future existence; these hopes and fears operate, if they operate at all, upon *man*, a creature which we ought to study before we can know the kind of moral regimen suitable for him, or pronounce any thing concerning it. If then it be found, *in fact*, that future, distant, unknown, inconceivable good, does not constitute a motive which influences this animal, in vain we may declaim for ever upon its power, as we may upon that of the magnet, which, although of great influence upon certain bodies, attracts not common earth. The preacher asks (page 13) "*What is there to restrain an atheist from the commission of crime, when it flatters with prospect of impunity and the certainty of immense advantage?*" I answer, his sympathies, and his fear of self-reproach. It is true that this declaimer thinks self-reproach a folly, where detection can be avoided; but unless silenced by the sophistry of superstition, self-reproach will always accompany inhumanity of conduct; it flows from the constitution of man, and is absolutely unavoidable.

If the preacher think these sympathies too weak, and this fear too foolish to restrain atheists from crime, I demand of him to shew me what is strong where these have been found weak? Are the hopes and fears of a future life?

Answer, ye Constantines, ye Offas, ye Richards, ye Henrys, ye religious murderers of all ages and nations, did these hopes and fears prevent you

from butchering your children, your wives, your connections? Let us not forget the *actual* effect of these things. The pinnacle of conjecture suits the religious astronomer for his observations, he thence descries new planets and calculates their motions; but the vale of reality becomes him who would lay down the law for man.

The preacher in the 15th page draws a picture of the new society which he has discovered in his aerial voyage, in which men are in continual dread of assassination from their brethren because they do not believe in hell. Now, if such remarks were not unworthy of notice, with whatever vigour they are expressed (as we observe without admiration, and with a perfect feeling of terror, the animation and energy of madness) we would observe that we confide in or distrust men, from an observation of their actual dispositions and manners. These cannot deceive us; professions of any kind may. Murder has not only been committed in ten thousand instances by men pretending to religion, but they have even committed murder as *a duty* of their religion! At this moment the page of ecclesiastical history opens before me, and my blood freezes in my veins at the view of its horrors. It is, perhaps, not improper here to remark that atheism is at least free from this crime, *it enjoins not murder as a duty*. It is, indeed, an essential doctrine of most religions, as they are taught by the priesthood to the people, that the
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duties of morality and those of religion when they clash (a very possible supposition, and no uncommon occurrence) are to be preferred according to their importance, and those of religion being more important, the duties of morality may be sacrificed to them. This doctrine, taught at this moment in all our churches, affirms the propriety of making war for the defence of religion, though it be an undisputed duty to live in all other cases at peace with all men; it affirms the propriety of pious frauds, the propriety of the indulgence of antisocial passions, against those who are not of the same faith. This is no calumny. From this principle have proceeded wars more brutal and savage than have originated in any other cause; this principle sharpened the dagger on the fatal day of St. Bartholemew, and lighted up the fires of Smithfield. To deprive of life was the last punishment of crime, until the priesthood, possessing a ferocity all their own, invented lingering tortures for those whom reason had enlightened, and virtue had made bold.

In the 16th and 17th pages the preacher affirms that unbelievers are universally destitute of the great and heroic virtues. The class of unbelievers he would persuade us is very numerous, and he more than insinuates throughout his whole discourse, that all the actors in the French revolution belonged to it. Indeed it is evidently the leading purpose of his harangue to charge the French revolution

volution either as the cause or the effect of atheism; for he knows that vulgar credulity has been tried on this head, and that it is equal to any trial to which he can put it; he knows, too, that those who receive and those who dispense the riches of the country, are gratified by this representation. The actors in this great revolution were *atheists*, and atheists are entirely destitute of the great and heroic virtues! Wonderful men! Ye who have perished in a land devoted to ruin by a combination of professed Christians, ye who have perished in the field and on the scaffold, if ye were *atheists*, then are atheists capable of great and heroic virtues. Ye died, and dying blessed your bleeding country; ye were led to slaughter, and in the moment of dissolution poured benedictions upon that republic in whose cause ye fell. Yet ye were not heroes! No priest graced your funeral, no solemn mummery attended that sad scene, *so ye were not heroes!* If the eye of diligence were to search the whole annals of the human race, to discover whatever belongs to the great and heroic in character, it would find in the history of revolutionary France, during the last ten years, examples more remarkable than it could discover in the history of the whole world besides. Were it any part of this preacher's plan to preserve an *appearance* of truth and fairness, did he not, in imitation of some high public characters, the political Brodums and Katterfeltoes of this age of imposition, outrage all decency

cency by the most palpable falsehood of statement, I should have sympathised with him on occasion of this unfortunate and unseasonable reference to the French revolution, in connexion with his charge of littleness, selfishness, and feebleness on the sceptical character. But to public men it is, alas! now matter of indifference whether ten or ten thousands detect their errors, they speak and they write only to the lowest vulgar, the rich and the poor vulgar, and they know that they have in them willing, obedient, and uninquisitive disciples. Did my interest induce me to side with the enemies of France, did it urge me on to swell the rude clamour against the sons of innovation, I confess I should enter upon my office with a sigh, I should feel the deepest regret, that I must bid adieu to all the finest sympathies of my nature, that I must cease to admire, or at least cease to applaud, that noble patriotism which, in the bosom of danger and of death, has reared its head erect, and defied the vengeance of brute invaders. My bosom must cease to glow at the recital of magnanimous deeds, achieved by thousands whose hearts were expanded by benevolent feelings, and who thought themselves fighting the battles of the human race, and proclaiming freedom to all generations. Let me not envy the rewards of such as make this horrible sacrifice! let me not think that they rise, whatever spoil they seize, to
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a superior rank in society ! they have entombed all the man, and are no longer fit to class with rational natures. I had rather be Ulysses in his rags, than the most decorated of the suitors at the banquet.

In the 18th page the preacher gives us a description of his *terra incognita*, which he finds full of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices. This land is certainly inhabited by none but priests and philosophers ; atheistical priests, and atheistical philosophers. It is indeed insinuated that these dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices occur in the same character ; yet one consolation remains, that if all vices are gigantic, they are, however, rare, the ordinary state of life being *a sickening uniformity of dwarfish virtues*. “ *A sickening uniformity prevails,*” says the preacher, “ *and the soul asserts its native grandeur only in volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.*” If there be any propriety in this bold figurative language, we are to conceive that it is meant at least to be admitted that these “ *volcanic eruptions*” are as rare and as partial in this state of atheistical society as volcanic eruptions are in nature. One observation on this thundering rant may not be omitted. It is in opposition to all philosophy, that the preacher supposes that the same mind can be great in its vices and little in its virtues ; for the mind will give its own character to all its vices and to all its virtues. He who is great and
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energetic in crime, will either be destitute of virtue altogether, or his virtues will bear the impress of nobility. The preacher meditates neither a tragedy nor an epic poem, otherwise he would have had occasion to pay some attention to propriety of character. Had Homer or Shakspeare given us a few samples of the parson's atheistical heroes, at once great and little, energetic and weak, deviating into all possible contradictions in action and conduct, we should never have known them on their second appearance, and Ajax and Ulysses might have passed each other a thousand times in the infernal regions, without any recognition. Shakspeare in these eccentric flights would have been saluted with the groans and the hisses of a disgusted and indignant audience. But the pulpit is a privileged place, beneath it sits no rigid critic, the vulgar adoring audience are taught to hear in silence and approve. They have nothing to do with the laws laid down by their preacher but to obey them.

Atheism little tends to alter our moral sentiments; I have shewn that these are formed by our necessary and infant connexion with our species, and not by our catechism; and man is rarely in his conduct actuated by cool calculations of interest.

The preacher, indeed, after building his whole fabric upon human selfishness, in the grossest ac-

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ception, admits the truth of the remark, in this and the following page of his discourse.

We know that man is so little a creature of cool calculation, that he will sacrifice his life, and even a christian man his hope of salvation too, in resisting an affront, or to procure posthumous fame, yet are both these mere phantoms, and when balanced against the important interests over which they triumph, nothing. Were man a creature such as the preacher makes him, this conduct would be absolutely impossible. The chances of human life may be calculated with mathematical exactness; I would wish to propose a problem to those who are the greatest proficient in the doctrine of chances. How often will a man, during fifty years of maturity and reason, act upon a fair mathematical calculation of his interests, weighing exactly and at once their importance and duration? If the preacher can solve this problem, he will be able to give us yet an improved edition of this elaborate sermon.

Page 19th. The preacher says, "*The exclusion of a supreme Being, and of a superintending Providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste,*" and he attempts to prove this by observing, that this exclusion shuts perfection out from human contemplation.

As well might he say that this exclusion tends directly to the destruction of a taste for beauty in art.

art. It is certain that all human excellence is imperfect, and so is all human beauty. The Grecian sculptor did not entirely form his Apollo and his Venus from any living human Beings. He embraced the perfection of humanity wherever he saw it, and this assemblage of perfection he attempted to combine in his work. The great master-works of art are all thus formed, and will any man say that we do any thing more than ascribe the human virtues in their perfection to God; when we describe his attributes? This perfection is the conception of man, and not at all dependent upon his placing it in the character of a supreme Being. This human perfection alone it is, which can influence man to love and to imitation. When we trace it in deity it is no longer a virtue to form man's moral taste, but something entirely above his conception. Human virtue in its perfection exhibits *laborious effort* or *painful self-denial*; but to the Deity this virtue has no proper application. To him no effort can be laborious, and he is incapable of what we understand by self-denial. The moral character of deity is, doubtless, more sublime than that of man, but it must ever be to man strictly incomprehensible, and consequently altogether out of the question in the sympathetic operation of forming in man a moral taste. The moral taste of man must be formed according to his nature and condition; it may be formed by the contemplation of the human character of the sublime and venerable author of

Christianity, but never can by the contemplation of the moral character of God. To those who are at all accustomed to reflect, I have said enough on this head; and to those who never reflect, I wish never to say any thing. Were this discourse the production of an ordinary methodist, it should have escaped my animadversion; as the production of a man of some attainments, it fills me with astonishment, as it is so utterly destitute of all philosophical investigation.

In the 22d page we are told, that although our conception of the character of God be continually growing, and never fixed, yet thence arises “a *fixed standard* of moral excellence.”

Now I presume that, admitting the force of the reasoning under this head, which, however, I completely deny, the *standard of excellence* to us must vary according to our conception of the character of God, and consequently never can be *fixed*; for God can be a standard of excellence only as his character is perceived, or a conception is formed of it. But it is trifling with the patience of the intelligent reader to point out the contradictions of popular declamation, and I shall not soon again offend in this way. This forbearance, however, is the effect of choice, and not of necessity, as the sermon abounds with contradictions, now stating selfishness as the principle which ought to govern man, and then exhibiting selfishness as the result of a corrupt philosophy.

In the 22d and 23d pages we are told, that
 “ *When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and of moral obligation disappeared along with it.*” It is not, I suppose, meant here to be affirmed that there was a time in which there existed amongst men no notion of a God; for although it be true that whole regions of mankind have been found who acknowledged no future life for man, I presume that some belief in a God has been the faith of all nations. If the preacher mean to say that when men ceased to ascribe perfect attributes to the deity they ceased to have perfect notions of morality, he only affirms what I have before affirmed, that the divine character is conceived to resemble the human, and when men cease to form perfect ideas of human virtue, they will, of course, have no perfect notions of virtue to ascribe to God. To colour his representation of this matter he goes on to contrast *Pagan practice* with *Jewish law*. A similar artifice is practised by professing christians, such as Leland, who contrast *christian precepts* with the *conduct* of exceptionable unbelievers; but say not a word of *christian conduct*.

This is a trite artifice, and meant for the vulgar to whom it is addressed. Let us for once be candid. Let *laws* be compared with *laws*, *precepts* with *precepts*, and *conduct* with *conduct*, and then let the priesthood celebrate, if they can, the triumph of the Jews. Tell me of better
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precepts in your Jewish books than in those of Antoninus, Epictetus, and Seneca. Shew me a ruler amongst the Jews more truly great than the first of these philosophers. Let me see in the *practice* of Pagans, renowned amongst their countrymen, more disgraceful circumstances than in that of Abraham, Jacob, David, or Solomon. Even the heathen priesthood, corrupt as they were, (and the priesthood of every country are corrupt, asserters of tyranny, and aspiring to be the masters of mankind) need not blush to be introduced to the sons of Elr.

The Jewish worship, it is said, shews the purity of the Being to whom it is addressed. I confess that to me the blood of bulls and of calves is not a medium through which I should have expected to have seen a pure divinity. The God of the Jews too, (agreeably to the observations already made concerning our ideas of the divine, being borrowed from our ideas of the human character) is represented as actuated by the worst of human passions, jealousy, hatred, and a revenge which pursues with vengeance the children of offenders, though at the time of the offence, *unborn*. Does such a representation of the deity afford *a perfect standard of moral-excellence*? What would be the character of man formed upon this standard? And yet the preacher states that all human virtue depends upon just, that is, in his language, *Jewish* notions being formed of God. Find me in the sacred books of heathen
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superstition any representation more horrible than this Jewish character of a vindictive God.

When sensible men take exception at the representations of deity found in the books of the chosen people, where God is exhibited as acting always like a man, but not always like a good man, they are told by the priesthood that this representation is an adaptation to human weakness, the language of mere accommodation. The observation is childish, or worse than childish. Shall a God, whose character is to be admired and imitated, represent himself unworthily, in order to meet man's unworthy notions? This is to sink man below the human character, in imitation of the divine! And will not the same remark apply to heathen representations of divinity, as far as such representations need such an apology? Stupid and besotted credulity, which can tolerate such babbling! The parent will teach his child an erect walk, and he commands him to keep his eye upon the pavement!

In the 25th page we are told, that infidelity tends to the growth of vanity, ferocity, and unbounded sensuality. How that system should foster vanity which strips man of all pretensions but those founded in real acquisitions, which displays nature without mystery, and society without disguise, let those determine who read this discourse. The vanity of those who supposed themselves to be the favourites of God has always been
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proverbial, from the Jew in the Land of Promise, to the Methodist in the Tabernacle. The priesthood too are, from the same cause, justly chargeable with unbounded vanity.

The ferocious character attaches not with marked propriety to any body of men so much as to the priesthood, and the instruments of the priesthood. Do the annals of atheism furnish a St. Dunstan, an Odo, a Henry the Eighth, or a Philip of Spain? Where is the chamber of atheism in which a ferocious inquisition has sat? Unbridled sensuality is the creature of luxury, and of that state of society in which, by artificial distinctions, immense inequality of condition is created and sustained.

What gives one human being power over another? The possession of wealth, the ability to confer favour and ease, and the means of life and pleasure. Prostitution is no sentimental evil, it is the offspring of grievous inequality, of the abject degradation of millions. But artificial distinctions, the foundation of oppressive inequality, are opposed by the atheistical philosophy, which, reducing nature to its elements, finds nothing in man which ought to receive respect but cultivated reason or beneficial effort, which strips him of all false and subduing pretensions, of hereditary veneration, or wealth which rapine has seized, and places his fellow man before him erect, free and independent.

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Have sceptical philosophers been exemplars of sensuality? The temperate and simple Epicurus, the mild and sociable Spinoza, the retired and contemplative Hobbes, and the cheerful and chaste Hume, will hardly be quoted even by professional falsehood and defamation itself, as sensual and voluptuous characters.

Let us attend with greater particularity to the preacher's remarks under these three heads.

His remarks upon the character and influence of vanity appear to have been borrowed from Mr. Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Assembly. That pamphlet seems to have been his model in drawing up his discourse. Indeed every thing Mr. Hall has said has been before said by Mr. Burke, so that the only merit which the preacher can claim is that of having copied a great original, like every copyist, with much effort and stiffness of execution, and without any thing of the grace and ease of the prime artist. Let us hear Mr. Burke, the original.

“ Their great problem is to find a substitute for all the principles which hitherto have been employed to regulate the human will and action. They find dispositions in the mind, of such force and quality, as may fit men, far better than the old morality, for the purposes of such a state as theirs, and may go much further in supporting their power, and destroying their enemies. They have therefore chosen a selfish, flattering, seductive,

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tive, ostentatious vice, in the place of plain duty. True humility, the basis of the christian system, is the low, but deep and firm foundation of all real virtue. But this, as very painful in the practice, and little imposing in the appearance, they have totally discarded. Their object is to merge all natural and all social sentiment in inordinate vanity. In a small degree, and conversant in little things, vanity is of little moment. When full grown, it is the worst of vices, and the occasional mimic of them all. It makes the whole man false. It leaves nothing sincere or trust-worthy about him. His best qualities are poisoned and perverted by it, and operate exactly as the worst. When your lords had many writers as immoral as the object of their statue (such as Voltaire and others) they chose Rousseau; because in him that peculiar vice which they wished to erect into a ruling virtue, was by far the most conspicuous.

“ We have had the great professor and founder of *the philosophy of vanity* in England. As I had good opportunities of knowing his proceedings almost from day to day, he left no doubt in my mind, that he entertained no principle either to influence his heart, or to guide his understanding, but *vanity*. With this vice he was possessed to a degree little short of madness. It is from the same deranged eccentric vanity, that this, the insane *Socrates* of the National Assembly, was impelled

pelled to publish a mad confession of his mad faults, and to attempt a new sort of glory, from bringing hardily to light the obscure and vulgar vices which we know may sometimes be blended with eminent talents. He has not observed on the nature of vanity, who does not know that it is omnivorous; that it has no choice in its food; that it is fond to talk even of its own faults and vices, as what will excite surprise and draw attention, and what will pass at worst for openness and candour. It was this abuse and perversion, which vanity makes even of hypocrisy, which has driven Rousseau to record a life not so much as chequered, or spotted here and there, with virtues, or even distinguished by a single good action. It is such a life he chooses to offer to the attention of mankind. It is such a life, that with a wild defiance, he flings in the face of his Creator, whom he acknowledges only to brave. Your assembly, knowing how much more powerful example is found than precept, has chosen this man (by his own account without a single virtue) for a model. To him they erect their first statue. From him they commence their series of honours and distinctions."

Now we will hear the copyist.

" Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed, (and it is often disappointed) it is exasperated

into malignity and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged upon them, for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their being insensible of his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtue, talents, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness, and unrelenting hostility. Some have doubted of the existence of such a disposition; they have supposed the disinterested hatred of mankind impossible; but it is certainly to be found amongst the sediments and dregs of disappointed vanity. It is a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to a profound indifference to the welfare of others; so that whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer and to sympathize; he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned

adorned with the rays of beneficence or his steps are dyed in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred."

In the progress of his declamation on the influence of vanity, the preacher introduces (page 32) the French revolution, and describes it with all its incidental horrors. Far be it from us to regard with indifference, or to read without indignation, the annals of blood; but it were an insult to every ordinary understanding to exhibit scenes of horror without pointing out their real cause. What was the French revolution before despotic and insolent power threatened to crush it? The fair form of Liberty opening its breast to the pure sun-beams, undefiled as the light of heaven. It was hailed by the good of every country, as the angel of deliverance to the human race. After the menaces of Despotism, and the approach of polluted Power, jealousy and confusion mixed in the assemblies of faithful men, and when the sons of God appeared, the devil, as of old, was amongst them. The preacher may amuse himself, and astonish his audience by a detail of horrors, the effects of vanity operating in innovation; and he will consult his interest in thus making his bow, in their own stile, to his new friends. Had he, however, meant to pursue truth in tracing the operation of vanity, he would have been led to contemplate the French revolution

as an attack upon vanity—the vanity of ages. He would have seen in the ancient orders which it has overturned, nothing but distinctions which vanity had created, and which oppression preserved. He would have shewn the malign and unrelenting spirit of vanity, in the resistance made to that revolution: and he would have shewn the extent of its mischief in the combination of despots, and the schemes of destruction to which it had given birth. The abolition of vain titles, he would have shewn, had excited more resistance than have been made to the most dreadful innovations which tyrants have introduced into free countries. In this he would have imitated Him whom he affects to call Master and Lord. Jesus Christ said, not to bold innovators of yesterday, but to the pharisees, the ancient depositaries of power, “How can ye believe, who receive honours from men?”—He laid the axe to the root of the tree, and boldly attacked governors and rulers of the people. He denounced them as hypocrites, and ripe for damnation. Why did Jesus not repress the spirit of revolution? Did he anticipate no such thing as revolution? The contrary is laid before us in threatenings and predictions, in proof irresistible. Why then did he fan the rising flame of revolt, by repeated, pointed, severe, and studied attacks upon the governors in church and state, and that in the presence of the unlettered populace? He

He was, doubtless, impelled by the force of truth, the feelings of honest and holy indignation. He flattered not the great, he sought not their patronage. Immortal teacher ! it was thine to instruct by example ; it is the fate of thy pretended followers to defeat thy instructions by *their example*.

To shew that scepticism tends to foster a ferocity of character, Mr. Hall proceeds (page 38) to observe that a belief in a future life renders this life of more importance, and disposes to reluctance in taking it away.

Were we to follow the preacher into the regions of theory, perhaps there it would not be difficult to prove that whatever makes the future life any thing to men, must make the present, in the same proportion, trifling and insignificant. I will not, however, attack him in the regions of visionary conjecture, but examine this position in the light of experience.

Have Christians shewn a reluctancy to shed blood ? Have they felt the importance of life so as to overawe them, and deter them from taking it away ? Not a century has passed without wars since the gospel of peace was established, begun, and continued, for the avowed purpose of *cutting off* the enemies of this religion, or some peculiar dogmas of this religion. This pretext, this motive, has put millions of armed men in motion, has bathed the plains in blood, laid towns in ashes, mixed the poison, and sharpened the dagger of assassins.

assassins. It has been admitted as a *principle*, it has been defended as a *principle* (I maintain the truth of the assertion in the face of this preacher, and of all preachers, and call upon them to deny or to refute it) that it is lawful to kill the body in order to save the soul; that it is lawful, for errors in religious belief merely, to pursue the erroneous with injury, to involve them in ruin, and cut them off from life. This is the principle which Peter the Hermit preached; this principle blew the trumpet of the crusades; and this principle strengthened the hands of Despotism to desolate devoted France.

If this be not a principle of Christianity, which indeed it is not, it has always been a *principle* of Christians, and of the Christianity which priests and statesmen have professed and preached. The violations of justice, humanity, and all the social charities, which have arisen from this *principle*, have been no accidental errors of frail man; they have been no excesses committed under the pressure of danger, in the hurry of revolution, or under the influence of a momentary and maddening jealousy: they are the systematic consequences of an acknowledged *principle*, preached and defended by theologians in every age, and enforced and acted upon by statesmen in every Christian country. Let the millions who perished in the holy land say, if the belief of a future life makes men cautious of shedding blood. Let the assassinations and massacres of St. Bartholo-

mew, which a king in person urged on and animated; the murders of the Huguenots, which a whole court and a whole church plotted and blessed; the fires of Smithfield, which royalty and episcopacy, the crown and the mitre, raised into a blaze, give evidence to this fact. We must not pass slightly over this argument. I denounce a *principle* admitted by almost every christian, acted upon by most christians, and certainly neither disavowed nor counteracted by the spirit and reasoning of this sermon, *that it is just to punish men for errors in religious opinions**. I call the reader anxiously to the examination of this *principle*. I denounce it as the destroyer of all the foundations of morality: for what does it not authorize? *Any injury in this life for a supposed error concerning another life*. Thou shalt do no murder, is, by this principle, made a limited command. It says, murder only heretics. What you would that men should do to you,

* So far is this *principle* from being disavowed in this sermon, that the preacher (page 43d) throws it out as a reproach upon the violent parties which stained the glory of the French revolution, that they had not even the hypocrisy to pretend that they were executing the vengeance of God; and this is so expressed, that it is impossible not to infer that Mr. Hall, as he thinks this consideration aggravated their crimes, means to insinuate, that if they had covered their motives by this stale pretext of murder, they would have been excusable, if not meritorious.

do that to them. The sum of the whole law here finds its limits too. Do good to the household of faith, and to them only. Kill, plunder, calumniate the heretics. The very nomenclature of morality is by this principle changed. Thus we see all public religions opposed to all private morality. Is utility the principle of virtue, the principle of virtue is for ever destroyed by this religious principle. Yes, the obligations of morality must be present, and the social relations must limit and define the virtue of all character*.

If the reader would find examples of ferocity exceeding that of the wild beasts of the forest, he must not peruse the history of scepticism, but the bloody annals of the church. He may, if he pleases, look to France, but let him not neglect the plains of

* I appeal to Mr. Hall, in the retirement of his closet, where he breathes the calm air of philosophy, to whom the great principles of morals can be no new science, and there ask him, if every religion which confines not virtue to mere beneficence, do not necessarily destroy all the foundations of virtue, by changing its very nature. It is certain that he who demands our faith proclaims his own imposture; but without enlarging upon that head, he who places morality or human excellence, in faith, in an imaginary love of God, whom we have not seen, and whom we can neither injure nor benefit, in the performance of ceremonies, or in any thing besides beneficent action, takes away every sanction of that virtue which alone can benefit families, friends, mankind. Mr. Hall will, in this light, examine the doctrines of *all sects of Christians*, in his great work.

Peru. If he look to France, let him glance, in his haste, at the allied armies ; read the manifesto of Brunswick ; and allow a little to unhappy Frenchmen for the frenzy of despair, and the dread of butchery from conquering priests. He will find, in the hurry of the heart, not an apology for crime, but a cause of disorder, the parent of violence. If, however, he can see no sin in God's elect ; if the infant republic alone must be searched for monsters, let him not say that the horrors of the hated September were perpetrated under the reign of Atheism. Robespierre was not only a believer, but so very a child of superstition, that he never entered upon public business until he had attended mass. I demand from the preacher an instance of one death on those mortal days, never to be forgotten, ever to be deplored, inflicted on account of mere religious belief, and in gratification of atheistical fanaticism.

Indeed, no such instance can be found. Atheism slept on these days, and jealousy, suspicion, fear, and revenge alone triumphed. The army of Brunswick approached the capital, and threatened it with military execution. Every horror was the legitimate offspring of this dreadful circumstance. Here was no studied plot, no cool and systematic execution. With the pious massacre of St. Bartholomew, in the same Paris, even these deeds of horror may be advantageously contrasted. But I have no relish for such painting; the prime artists

of hell can alone dwell with pleasure on such light and shade.

But atheism, it seems, prompts to unbridled sensuality. How does the preacher establish this point? Why, *one man* said to be an atheist, has denied the propriety of marriage, and foolishly called it the worst of monopolies. Let this solitary atheist preach his doctrine, and by his example, after the manner of preachers, prove that either his doctrine or that himself is false. Marriage is, indeed, an institution of wisdom; and has never been denied that character by any body of unbelievers. And have there been no christians, *no christian sects*, who have held the lawfulness of promiscuous commerce? What says the preacher to the brothers and sisters of a free spirit? The reverend declaimer may read for his instruction, or others may read to his confusion, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History; 13th and 16th centuries. What if Mr. Godwin had, like John of Leyden, married eleven wives, or lived with eleven women without being married at all, what if like the same apostle he had run stark naked up and down the streets, as many Quakers have done in England, has scepticism to answer for such eccentricities? If so, christianity must answer for similar eccentricities. Let the reader confound the parson by perusing the 137th and 138th, and following pages of the same Ecclesiastical History, where he will find the sensuality of the christian clergy as reprehensible

hensible at least, as that of the apostle of atheism. The *licentious amours* of christian divines, are at least as various and as remarkable as those of the notorious author of Political Justice.

It is somewhat remarkable, however, that the best treatise in our language upon the perpetuity of the marriage bonds, and in defence of their perpetuity, was written by Mr. Hume. Why may I not as well be permitted to take Mr. Hume as the expositor of the sceptical sect's opinions on this head, as Mr. Godwin. Mr. Godwin, I suspect, has not one disciple, nay he is not even a disciple himself of his own philosophy, whilst Mr. Hume has thousands of adherents.

It is not *quite* accurate in the preacher to say (page 45) that Jesus forbade polygamy and divorce. He certainly only forbade divorces in certain cases, in which the divine Moses had authorised them; as he had authorized polygamy, as has been shewn beyond all question by the late Mr. Madan. It is unfortunate for the preacher that in extolling the purity of the religion of Jesus, he is obliged to treat with disrespect the laws of his favourite Jews.

It appears that the Jewish lawgiver did not adapt all his laws to elevate and purify the character of his people, but that he formed some of his laws to their desires, and did not disdain to consult the hardness of their hearts.

In his next printed discourse I expect that the
preacher

preacher will tell us the *reason* of this, and prove that it is not only suitable to the character of a divine ruler, but an *evidence* of his divine mission. Moses was very liberal to the men in his doctrine of divorce, but to the ladies he shewed not so much politeness. He wanted the favour of men of war, and his soldiers were not warriors in petticoats.

Mr. Hall has advanced so much and so well upon the subject of marriage and the family relations in some subsequent pages, that it is natural to conclude that he is there again copying his great original. The reader shall judge for himself.

“ If the system of institution, recommended by the Assembly, is false and theatric, it is because their system of government is of the same character. To that, and to that alone, it is strictly conformable. To understand either, we must connect the morals with the politics of the legislators. Your practical philosophers, systematic in every thing, have wisely begun at the source. As the relation between parents and children is the first among the elements of vulgar, natural morality *, they erect statues to a wild, ferocious,

* Filiola tua te delectari lætor et probari tibi *ἡδονὴν φυσικὴν* esse τὴν πρὸς τὰ τέκνα: etenim, si hæc non est, nulla potest homini esse ad hominem naturæ adjunctio: qua sublata vitæ societas tolletur. Valete Patron [Rousseau] et tui condiscipuli! [L'Assemblée Nationale].

Cic. Ep. ad Atticum.

low.

low-minded, hard-hearted father, of fine general feelings; a lover of his kind, but a hater of his kindred. Your masters reject the duties of this vulgar relation, as contrary to liberty; as not founded in the social compact; and not binding according to the rights of men; because the relation is not, of course, the result of *free election*; never so on the side of the children, not always on the part of the parents.

“ The next relation which they regenerate by their statues to Rousseau, is that which is next in sanctity to that of a father. They differ from those old-fashioned thinkers, who considered pedagogues as sober and venerable characters, and allied to the parental. The moralists of the dark times, *preceptorem sancti voluere parentis esse loco*. In this age of light, they teach the people, that preceptors ought to be in the place of gallants. They systematically corrupt a very corruptible race, (for some time a growing nuisance amongst you) a set of pert, petulant, literators, to whom, instead of their proper, but severe, unostentatious duties, they assign the brilliant part of men of wit and pleasure, of gay, young, military sparks, and dangles at toilets. They call on the rising generation in France, to take a sympathy in their adventures and fortunes, and they endeavour to engage their sensibility on the side of pedagogues, who betray the most awful family trusts,
and

and vitiate their female pupils. They teach the people, that the debauchers of virgins, almost in the arms of their parents, may be safe inmates in their house, and even fit guardians of the honour of those husbands who succeed legally to the office which the young literators had pre-occupied, without asking leave of law or conscience.

“ Thus they dispose of all the family relations of parents and children, husbands and wives. Through this same instructor, by whom they corrupt the morals, they corrupt the taste. Taste and elegance, though they are reckoned only among the smaller and secondary morals, yet are of no mean importance in the regulation of life. A moral taste is not of force to turn vice into virtue; but it recommends virtue with something like the blandishments of pleasure; and it infinitely abates the evils of vice. Rousseau, a writer of great force and vivacity, is totally destitute of taste in any sense of the word. Your masters, who are his scholars, conceive that all refinement has an aristocratic character. The last age had exhausted all its powers in giving a grace and nobleness to our natural appetites, and in raising them into higher class and order than seemed justly to belong to them. Through Rousseau, your masters are resolved to destroy these aristocratic prejudices. The passion called love, has so general and powerful an influence; it makes so much

much of the entertainment, and indeed so much the occupation of that part of life which decides the character for ever, that the mode and the principles on which it engages the sympathy, and strikes the imagination, become of the utmost importance to the morals and manners of every society. Your rulers were well aware of this; and in their system of changing your manners to accommodate them to their politics, they found nothing so convenient as Rousseau. Through him they teach men to love after the fashion of philosophers; that is, they teach to men, to Frenchmen, a love without gallantry; a love without any thing of that fine flower of youthfulness and gentility, which places it, if not among the virtues, among the ornaments of life. Instead of this passion, naturally allied to grace and manners, they infuse into their youth an unfashioned, indelicate, sour, gloomy, ferocious medley of pedantry and lewdness; of metaphysical speculations, blended with the coarsest sensuality. Such is the general morality of the passions to be found in their famous philosopher, in his famous work of philosophic gallantry, the *Nouvelle Eloise*."—BURKE.

"Nor is it in this way only that marriage institutions are essential to the welfare of mankind. They are the sources of tenderness, as well as the guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes, there can be no permanent families: the dissolution of nuptial ties involves
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the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity, which cement mankind together, and which, were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

“Families are so many centres of attraction, which preserve mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive powers of selfishness. The order of nature is, evermore, from particulars to generals. As in the operations of intellect, we proceed from the contemplation of individuals to the formation of general abstractions, so in the developement of the passions in like manner, we advance from private to public affections, from the love of parents, brothers and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind *.

“In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender; for benevolent affections are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early

* *Arctior vero colligatio societatis propinquorum: ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis, in exiguum angustumque concluditur, nam cum sit hoc natura commune animalium ut habeant libidinem procreandi prima societas in ipso conjugio est, proxima in liberis deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ. Cic. de Off.*

impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which it is the best possible school.

“ The advocates of Infidelity invert this eternal order of nature. Instead of inculcating the private affections, as a discipline by which the mind is prepared for those of a more public nature, they set them in direct opposition to each other; they propose to build general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness, and to make us love the whole species more, by loving every particular part of it less. In pursuit of this chimerical project, gratitude, humility, conjugal, parental, and filial affection, together with every other social disposition, are reprobated; virtue is limited to a passionate attachment to the general good. Is it not natural to ask, when all the tenderness of life is extinguished, and all the bands of society are untwisted, from whence this ardent affection for the general good is to spring ?

“ When this savage philosophy has completed its work, when it has taught its disciple to look with perfect indifference on the offspring of his body and the wife of his bosom, to estrange himself from his friends, insult his benefactors, and silence the pleadings of gratitude and pity, will he by thus divesting himself of all that is human, be better prepared for the disinterested love of his species ? Will he become a philanthropist only be-

cause he has ceased to be a man? Rather, if these principles have their full effect, in this total exemption from all the feelings which humanize and soften, in this chilling frost of universal indifference, may we not be certain, selfishness, unmixed and uncontrouled, will assume the empire of his heart; and that under pretence of advancing the general good, an object to which the fancy may give innumerable shapes, he will be prepared for the violation of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime? Extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections; so that to expect to reap the former from the extinction of the latter, is to oppose the means to the end; is as absurd as to attempt to reach the summit of the highest mountain, without passing through the intermediate spaces, or to hope to attain the heights of science by forgetting the first elements of knowledge."—HALL.

I hope that on these subjects, as Mr. Hall has aspired to imitate Mr. Burke, he really feels the sentiments he has retailed with force only inferior to his favourite author. I will not say of his eloquence that I deserv in it every excellence but the enthusiasm of the heart, as Dr. Drennan has said of Mr. Burke's. I do not discover in Mr. Hall's eloquence every excellence which adorns Mr. Burke's. Mr. Hall wants the ease and flow, the fertility of allusion, the boundless fancy, and the rich and inexhaustible treasure of knowledge, which

which constituted the pride and ornament of Burke's mind. He has strength indeed, but it is the strength of a camel, rather than that of a bounding steed, equally distinguished for its vigour and the grace and elegance of its motions. He is fierce and even savage in expression, he burns, but he does not illuminate. His merit consists in repeating in different, and certainly not improved language, the opinions of Mr. Burke, often by himself and by others repeated, for his sermon neither boasts originality of thought, novelty of arrangement, nor acuteness of reasoning. I will suppose, however, that Mr. Burke happened to express the *feelings* of Mr. Hall, and that Mr. Hall has *therefore* copied his feelings, as well as Mr. Burke, in his declamation upon sensibility, tenderness, gratitude, and all the finest feelings of the finest minds.

If my supposition be correct, Mr. Hall's character must be still more admirable than his writings. Such a character may be thus described: His youth was distinguished by the most lively attachment to his parents, he anticipated their wishes, read the law in their looks, and exulted in their approbation. He sought their counsel with solicitude, and attended to it with the greatest piety. Their absence he felt as his greatest evil, and it was his solace, when he could not be with them, to fill up the time with the most affectionate correspondence. His attachment

ment to his early associates at school was equally delicate and strong, and he cherished it far beyond the period of their association. Distinguished by superior attainments, they never felt that distinction but to admire it, for arrogance he never discovered.

To those of whom he had received benefit and patronage his gratitude was proverbial, it never slept, it incessantly sought occasion of relief by returns of kindness and advantage. The remotest connexions of his benefactors he pursued and even oppressed with kindness and attention, and when he received a favour the scripture was fulfilled, and all acknowledged, that it was more blessed to give than to receive.

As a minister of religion he was, in mature years, unassuming, humble, kind. Betwixt him and others there could be no strife, no emulation, for he was anxious to be thought the least of all teachers, agreeably to the doctrine which he preached.

He has passed his youth without reproach, and in it found every associate a friend, and he now enjoys the noontide of life in the unclouded sunshine of social bliss.

This is an ideal character, but I shall be most happy to learn, that something like it, or better, is the character of Mr. Hall, this animated advocate of religion and social order.

In

In the 60th page the preacher seems to maintain that any superstition, a belief in Gods of any character, is better than absolute scepticism.

This is a position which, whether maintained in express words, or implied in various remarks and observations, ought not to be passed over without remark. I contend, that a belief in future rewards and punishments, connected with a belief that rewards are to be conferred upon the beneficent, upon those who serve mankind, and for that service exclusively, and punishment inflicted upon opposite characters, and alone for the injury done to beings who can feel it, is favourable to morality; because to all other present motives to virtue it adds another of some force, be it more or less, and by defining the nature of the virtue required, prevents the abuse of such a doctrine.

But I maintain that all religions, and every hope concerning futurity different from this, are not merely as bad, but infinitely worse than any kind or degree of scepticism. The reason is obvious. Atheism leaves every human present motive to virtue in full force, whilst superstition, and every religion or mode of faith more than or different from what I have expressed, is superstition, changes the name and the nature of morality, calls good evil and evil good, saps the foundations of all beneficence, and introduces malice, hostility, and murder, under the pretext

of *love to God*. This has before been illustrated in these pages, and illustrated, I trust, to some purpose. If the preacher had regarded the lessons of his Bible, as much as the smiles of prime ministers, he might thence have learned that a false religion is more mischievous than none: The religious of the land of Canaan, the worshippers of Moloch, murdered their own children in honour of their God. Has Mr. Hall found any solitary Athiest guilty of a similar crime, to set against the conduct of this whole people? It is evident that as far as the worship of God has *any influence*, it must, according to his character, exalt or corrupt. Superstition is universally corrupt and corrupting.

The simple theism of christianity, not the christianity of the schools, not the christianity of the pulpits, not the christianity of any sect of christians, but simple unmixed christianity, must, as far as it has any, have a good effect. I bow to that religion, pure, undefiled, unallied to human policy, untaught by hireling priests, cherished only in the heart, professed only in the conduct, moral and beneficent, and only moral and beneficent; that is the religion in the faith of which only I hope to live and to die. Let the priests of Moloch clamour, their speech betrayeth them. Athiesm is rare. But this preacher labours to make it believed to be general, and in 5th page he says a considerable proportion of those who pursue

pursue literature as a profession are the open or disguised abettors of atheism. How has he discovered the *disguised* abettors of atheism? It is the infirmity of some minds to judge that every one sees opinions and principles exactly in the light in which they appear to themselves. Thus some democrats believe there are no honest aristocrats, the evidence of democracy is so clear to them, and some aristocrats think there are no honest democrats, for a similar reason. I hope the preacher is not a *disguised atheist*, since he so readily thinks most literary characters are. If he be, I shall not discover it, for I cannot penetrate the disguise. He, however, is no solitary in his order if he be an atheist, for I can assure him, that few as I believe atheists to be, I know some clergymen are of the number.

It is a curious problem whence, or from what, the preacher has collected so much to alarm him in the political changes which are taking place. He knows that the most that revolutions can do to opinions is to pour upon them the light of free discussion. This and this only he does or can dread. In this to me there is nothing dreadful. He, too, once defended the liberty of the press, and that *after the most dreadful outrages of the French revolution*. This revolution was then in his language the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history. Whence this change, whence this alarm, this proclamation of danger?

He represents in his preface, that the peril is so great that all should forget slight differences, and rally round the ark of the Lord. Perhaps to go over to the establishment may be the sacrifice he meditates, as a proof of catholicism, and the best means of defending our common christianity now openly threatened. It is kind in the friends of religion and order thus to sacrifice their party and prejudices to the general safety. This was the noble conduct of an Elliot, a Windham, a Wedderburne, and a Bentinck. Why may their generous example not be followed by a Huntington, a Fuller*, and a Hall?

Mr.

* This wonderful coadjutor of Mr. Hall, whose performances he refers to only to praise, has published two works, the object of which is to vilify the characters of all who are not of his communion, particularly the Unitarians and the Deists. For this purpose he thinks no language too coarse, no calumny too stale, no artifice too base. With the falsehood and malignity of the old accuser, he retails scraps of scandal from Leland, and similar writers, and picks up tales from the most vulgar gossips, which, with all the solemnity of professional imposition he relates and amplifies. But the Unitarians have no need to blush before such an adversary. Their Lardners, Jebbs, Prices, Wakefields, Priestleys, and Lindseys, form a Constellation of virtue, from whose splendour this bird of night retires with noisy horror. I refer to the clergy of this sect, not because I believe them to be the most pure men of any sect, but because they are most known. I could name private christians of their communion, *after* whom any one of them would be proud to be placed. These, however, have been
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Mr. Flower, with the zeal of an honest, and the pride of a consistent man, has exposed the tergiversation of the Baptist preacher. But, perhaps, there is less inconsistency in Mr. Hall than he thinks there is. When Mr. Hall was the vaunted friend of freedom, the Republic of France was expected to triumph, and revolution to succeed revolution, until the ancient orders gave way before aspiring talent and daring enterprize. When he attacked freedom, and denounced its friends, though the Republic existed, the hope of general revolution had perished, and the existing orders

and are the most illustrious defenders which christianity ever knew. They have shewn that its spirit is reconcilable with a sound philosophy, and they have torn away those corruptions under which the *very foundations of all morality* were decaying. It is to these men, and to men like these, that christianity is indebted in an enlightened age for a fair investigation; as they will remove the contempt which philosophy had begun to entertain for it, from the garb and decorations under which its simplicity and beauty were concealed. Let the disciples of the murderer of Geneva shew me a group of such men in their churches, and I will cease to think the writings of Mr. Fuller libellous and contemptible. Even from this man Mr. Hall has not disdained to borrow a false and malicious charge against the accomplished and virtuous Hume, of whose writings Mr. Fuller is utterly incapable of forming any judgment, as he is of those of any other man, in which morals are treated of as a science. I am surprised that Mr. Kentish, an enlightened and excellent man, should have thought Mr. Fuller's writings worthy of an elaborate refutation.

only could reward merit. The observers of the course often see the best dog run east and then west ; but they never pronounce him confused or inconsistent until they have marked the footsteps of the game.

It seems now, that christianity is to be valued because "it secures to every one his rights ; to labourers and mechanics, the reward of their industry ; to the rich, the enjoyment of their wealth ; to nobles, the preservation of their honours ; and to princes, the stability of their thrones."

I wish there was nothing *inconsistent* in this mass of security. I wish the throne, the honour and the wealth, never interfered with the honest and ample reward of useful toil. I wish, if these preserved members of the body politic interfere not with each other, that the christianity of the pulpits did secure to the industrious a due reward. Let the history of Christendom be consulted. Never, at any period, or in any part of the world, have the labourers been less rewarded, or more plundered, than in the divisions of the globe called the christian world. When I first read this passage it was with a smile ; but that smile gave way to the frown of indignation, and the glance of scorn. Thank God ! I have not yet learned to insult my brother. The sons of toil are the truly honourable. I acknowledge no other to be honourable at all. Let their reward be secured, and

I will

I will rest in peace, regarding with no invidious eye the titles of the noble, or the thrones of kings.

I have but another word for the preacher. He believes, or professes to believe, in something more than the wisdom and sagacity of Jesus. But Jesus was without wisdom, if man be incapable of improvement. For this improvement he laid down his life. His improvement he taught, of it he prophesied; it was his theme, the basis of his conduct, and his reward. With this not only the divine mission, but the sanity of Jesus is committed. But improvement is the effect of reasoning, thought, freedom. Try, prove all things, is the language of our oracles. Freedom, then, is the agent of the gospel and its author, for human improvement. Like the undulation of the waves, it may destroy some glittering flies, but the element of life by it is kept pure.

The followers of Jesus, of whom I aspire to be one, will well weigh the lessons of their master. They know that without *freedom* all these lessons are vain. They know that atheism is fostered not by research, not by inquiry, not by revolution; but by pampering, corrupting establishments, to benefit by which men become first false, and without God in the world. They know that French atheism began, continued, and flourished under the monarchy, and in the church, and they know that all appearances of that kind in the revolution,

volution, were only the blossoms of a tree which had long had root, but that that tree was not the tree of liberty. Preacher! they know that true religion and christianity are but the fruits of freedom, and they will cherish freedom for their sake. They cannot believe that to see God in the universe, it is necessary to blind the eyes of men. You may perform your part, Jesus has shewn them how to perform theirs. He has denounced false teachers, in high office, and of high name.—
 “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!”

APPENDIX.

Observations on the Monthly Review.

AFTER I had finished my remarks upon Mr. Hall's sermon, a friend informed me that the Monthly Review for February contained a critique upon it, highly complimentary and flattering to the preacher, and full of assertions that the points he had laboured to prove, he had completely established. I told my friend that I had no respect for the Monthly Review, and that my contempt for that publication was bottomed upon a knowledge of its management, and an accurate observation of its spirit and tendency when I was in the habit of reading it. At that time, said I, scarcely a number was ever published which did not abound with contradictions in opinion and reasoning; and in addition to this puerile and detestable inconsistency, the language of that review had so uniformly varied according to the public prejudices of the moment, that I considered it as nothing but an *article of trade*, a mere quack medicine, of which the composition was nothing in the estimation of the proprietor, and the quantity sold every thing. I observed, that an uniform consistency of opinion and principle I only could descry in the Anti-Jacobin Review; and although I did not agree in opinion with

with the conductors of that work, and knew that they often stated as facts what never occurred, yet I could not but respect their uniform attack and defence much more than the pitiful and contemptible shopkeepers' tricks of a work, which enjoyed the public patronage only as the reward of a venality the most gross, and a prostitution the most palpable.

My friend said, that his opinion was similar to mine of the general conduct and character of the Monthly Review, but that the proprietor did sometimes procure an able man to write an occasional article of some worth in that work, lest it should be treated with universal scorn, and he be defeated in his object, *a profitable sale*; and added, that the critique in question was ascribed to Mr. Mackintosh.

Curious to know what Mr. Mackintosh would write upon a *sermon*, and upon a sermon on such a subject (as the religious opinions of that gentleman are but too well known for the part he is at present acting; yet, I hope he is not numbered by *Mr. Hall* amongst *concealed* athiests), I procured the review, and shall now proceed to offer upon the article a few animadversions.

As the reviewer has given his sanction to Mr. Hall's reasoning (if reasoning it can be called), upon the very heads which I have examined, it will be little needful for me to notice what he says, which consists in mere general praise and as-
sertion;

sertion ; for if I have refuted the preacher, I have confounded the friend. Since it is believed that Mr. Mackintosh wrote the article ; although I am astonished to find it contain sentiments on religion so opposite to those hitherto professed by that gentleman—although I am astonished to find him so unceremoniously consign his former associates in friendship and opinion to the rude censure and violent abuse of his friend, I am still more astonished (for violated friendships are the spoils of apostates) to find him quote, with marked approbation, the passage in which the preacher pretends that his theory of atheistical littleness of character, and the absence of heroic and splendid actions from that body of men, is agreeable to fact, and founded upon experience.

Mr. Mackintosh is read in history. Where then does he find the facts which substantiate this theory ? Where does he find a nation of atheists ? Where is their historian ? Where are their wars, their battles, their defeats ? Where are *the facts* referred to, but not named, because *the persons* are not named, not to be found in the history of the species ? Mr. Hall has, indeed, read history, and has told us that the French revolution, that “splendid event,” in his own language, was the work of atheists. If so, let the history of that revolution be the history of atheism. Can the lawyer and the preacher find no braving of danger, no heroic valour, no contempt of death,

in the actors in that mighty movement? The pulpit, the bar, and the lecture-room, are well enough calculated for a flourish on such subjects as courage, valour, firmness, virtue; but Cicero was a coward, and Bacon was a thief. Let the French revolution be the work of atheism; it has received the praises of Mackintosh and Hall, and of the divine, at least *since the most shocking atrocities* which have obscured its glory were acted.

Mr. Hall is said to have been much elated by the praises of this *writer by profession*, one of that body which the preacher has pronounced to be open or disguised atheists. At this, however, we must not be surprized. Mr. Burke and Mr. Hall have instructed us how to estimate the taste and appetite of vanity, which is gratified by every dish, by whatever hand set before it.

The reviewer says, that if Mr. Hall proceeds in the course which he has *here* so honourably begun, he will one day occupy no mean rank amongst the writers of the present day. The reviewer does well here to draw a line, and suggest a caution. He may reasonably fear that Mr. Hall, having *begun* in a course opposite to that which he at present pursues, may again change it; and under the impression of this fear, his caution merits the preacher's thanks. It is well, too, for him to draw a line of conduct for the candidate for literary reputation, and to tell him that according
to

to it he must move, if he would rank high amongst the writers of his age.

The reviewer knew that Mr. Hall was not now *beginning* his career as an author ; but he suggests to him that literary merit alone will not place him honourably amongst the best writers of the age. It must be that species of literary merit which the masters of mankind will praise. Mr. Hall must continue to bring an offering fit for the altar of Despotism. His other productions, like his former principles, are to be given to the worms and the bats : he *here* begins his literary career, and receives the honours of a triumph.

After the reviewer had praised him for *establishing* every principle which his sermon asserts, he passes on to notice the excellence of his style. He pronounces his style to be various, animated, easy, and free from all affectation. It is, indeed, various and animated, and on these accounts entitled to great praise ; but that it is easy and free from affectation, is an assertion which I am ready to dispute. A style less easy, more laboured, and which has cost more effort, I have seldom seen. Scarcely can a period be produced, which will not be proof conclusive of this. The style of Johnson is not more artificial, nor that of Cicero more laboured. Yet the trivial inaccuracies which the reviewer has found in it, are inseparable from *natural composition*, and must therefore be expected in the writings of Mr. Hall.

Whilst the reviewer has told us that the style is free from affectation, he has, by his own quotations, furnished the reader of taste with ample matter for his refutation. Speaking of our conception of the character of God, the preacher has said, and the reviewer has quoted it, "It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe." I should not chuse to be the artist who should attempt to paint a conception thus fitting, and thus employed. But I pass over the article of style (which, though neither easy nor free from affectation in this sermon, is yet sufficiently remarkable, like all his other writings, but not more so than they, to entitle the preacher to the character of superior talents in this way, and to the credit of a powerful imagination) to notice praise of another kind, bestowed upon him by this liberal reviewer. He says that the name of Mr. Hall will be placed amongst "*the brightest examples of christian charity!*" and this is the last flourish he makes. Mr. Hall an example of christian charity! This sermon the proof that he is so! With Mr. Hall I have nothing to do; but certainly the spirit of this discourse is an odd specimen, for any but an atheist to give, as an example of christian charity.

The sermon breathes in every line the spirit of a South, a Bonner, and a Horsley. Mr. Hall has drawn the character of Bishop Horsley: it is done

with a feeling which strongly indicates the clearest conception of such a character ; and the execution shews the hand of a master. If the character of Horsley be just, Horsley shall draw the character of his brother artist. This is, perhaps, unfair to Bishop Horsley ; for where a suspicion of copying may arise, the first painter possesses immense advantages. What does the reviewer mean by *christian charity* ? We are told that the *tender mercies* of the wicked are cruel ; yet they call them tender mercies. So this christian charity is surely not the charity defined by St. Paul, but the charity exemplified by priests, inquisitors, and kings, amongst whose names that of Hall will be placed as a bright example of their distinguishing excellence !

FINIS.



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